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Irresponsible accusations

We were optimistic the heated debate over who manages the Sullivan County nursing home would cool down following last month's vote on the 2006-07 county budget. It's clear now that Genesis will be on site for at least another year. Time and energy should be applied to better defining the company's role and planning for the future.

Unfortunately, the rhetoric has gotten worse, and we're beginning to question the real motivations of the nursing home's most vocal critics. Some of the same state representatives who oppose Genesis used a delegation meeting last Friday to make unfair and uninformed allegations about the facility and its operation. It seems politics and turf wars are being placed ahead of patients and the county's employees.

Since they've failed to achieve their goal of ending Genesis' tenure through the democratic process, it seems Rep. Tom Donovan and others have decided to resort to less savory tactics. Donovan, Rep. Charlotte Houde-Quimby and others claim they have the best interests of nursing home residents at heart, but their efforts are needlessly undermining public confidence in the institution and lowering the morale of the people who work there. Then again, maybe that's the goal.

The vast majority of employees at Sullivan County Health Care are hardworking professionals and deserve to be supported. They continue to offer the county's best care despite the drumbeat of unwarranted criticism by elected officials. They shouldn't have to put up with calls for reviews based on anonymous allegations of questionable merit.

If there is substandard care being given at the Sullivan County nursing home, it should be exposed, but we don't think that's the case. Despite cultivating disgruntled employees, Donovan and his ilk haven't produced a documented case of substandard care being covered up by management. Of course, this hasn't stopped the speculation and innuendo on the part of critics of Genesis. Rep. John Cloutier says he is looking into the cost of hiring another private company to review nursing home operations. That is an unnecessary, wasteful and counterproductive plan.

By most measures, Sullivan County Health Care is operating better now than it was when Genesis showed up. The unwillingness of some of our elected representatives to fairly evaluate the arrangement undermines their credibility. Their irresponsible words undermine the institution and people they claim to support.